

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Joseph Sestak of Pennsylvania's 7th District today hosted a special grants workshop conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for local nonprofit community arts organizations. The workshop was part of the agency's outreach to Pennsylvania arts organizations.

At a press conference before the workshop, NEA Chairman Dana Gioia explained the purpose of the workshop: "The National Endowment for the Arts is committed to supporting the arts in communities throughout the country," said Chairman Gioia. "I am delighted to be here in West Chester today to encourage local arts organizations to apply for federal grants."

"Art has always been a reflection of our culture and our civility," noted Congressman Joe Sestak, "and we must make it a priority in our federal, state, and school budgets. We all need to work toward more investment in the arts just as John F. Kennedy suggested when he said, 'I look forward to an America which will reward achievement in the arts as we reward achievement in business or statecraft. I look forward to an America which will steadily raise the standards of artistic accomplishment and which will steadily enlarge cultural opportunities for all of our citizens. And I look forward to an America which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength but for its civilization as well.'"

Rep. Sestak also announced that a local arts organization has been awarded a grant by the Arts Endowment. The Community Arts Center of Wallingford was awarded a Fiscal Year 2007 NEA Challenge America: Reaching Every Community grant of \$10,000 to support the Chester Youth Mural Program. The Community Arts Center will arrange for mural artist Paul Downie to assist approximately 175 young people in designing and executing outdoor murals for placement in the city of Chester. "This grant award means so much to the Chester High School Mural Program," said Community Arts Center Executive Director Deborah Yoder. "The students in this program now know that the National Endowment of the Arts believes in their project. That support and recognition is significant to this program and everyone involved in it. This grant has made the difference!"

The press conference and grants workshop were held in West Chester University's Swope Music Building. Mario Garcia Durham, NEA Director of Presenting, led the free session, which included a discussion of federal opportunities for projects that:

- provide hands-on learning in the arts for children and youth (pre-K to Grade 12) in schools, arts organizations, and community centers;
- help preserve cultural traditions through documentation, publications, exhibits, apprenticeships, and conservation;
- provide access to the arts in underserved communities; and
- involve the creation or presentation of works of art, including performances, exhibitions, and festivals.

Following the press conference, Rep. Sestak and NEA Chairman Gioia toured West Chester University's new Swope Music Building and Performing Arts Center as well as West Chester University's Poetry Center.

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, visit the NEA Web site at www.arts.gov.

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